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MONTANA CHRISTMAS TREE SHIPMENTS SLUMP IN 1960

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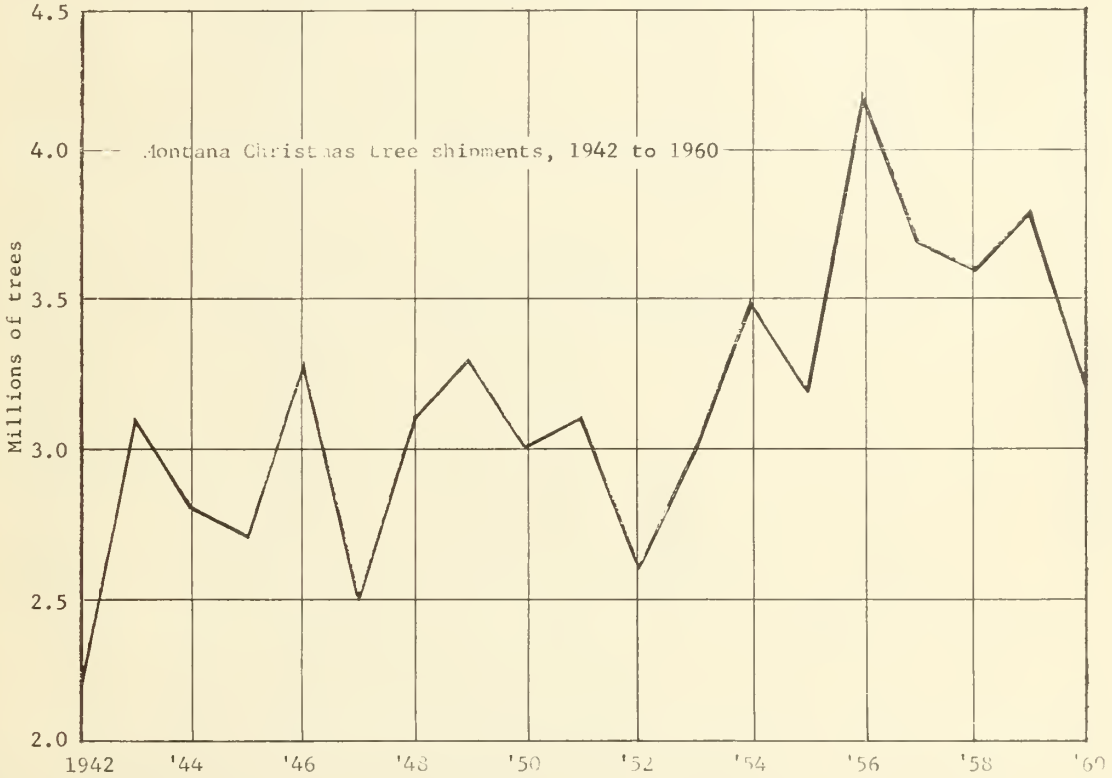
Shipments of Christmas trees from Montana[1/] in 1960, totaling 3.2 million trees, were 15 percent below shipments in 1959. On both percentage and numerical bases, this is the most marked single year's decline since 1947. In that year, shipments sagged to a point 24 percent (783 thousand trees) below the



1/ This report is concerned only with shipments of trees to points outside the State rather than total Christmas tree production. Data for rail shipments were supplied by each of the transstate railway lines, and data for truck shipments were supplied by the State Forester, the University of Montana, and the national forests. Figures for imports were furnished by the U.S. Customs Service. Unreported truck shipments, for which no adjustment has been made in this report, were estimated to amount to about 5 percent of all shipments.

previous year's exports. Two factors, (1) extensive defoliation and discoloration of Douglas-fir trees and (2) scarcity of personnel for administering sales from public lands, were cited in connection with that decline.[2/] For 1960, it appears that insects and diseases that attack the foliage of young Douglas-fir trees were the major causes for the slump, but the widespread business recession probably influenced it.

Two insect enemies and one disease of Douglas-fir had been especially active in parts of the Christmas tree producing areas in 1960. Reduced output and lowered quality of trees shipped from several areas in and near the Lewis and Clark, Helena, Bitterroot, and Deerlodge National Forests were attributed directly to extensive defoliation by the spruce budworm. Forest entomologists lend hope for improvement by reporting indications that spruce budworm infestations are on a downward trend.[3/] Infestations of another insect, a gall midge that attacks Douglas-fir needles, have flared up in western Montana and were reported to be prevalent in and about most of the Lolo National Forest; these infestations necessitated heavy culling of trees from these areas. Heavy populations of the gall midge over extensive areas around Superior, Montana, were especially effective in reducing size of the harvest and forced the closing of several Christmas tree yards.[4/] Needle blight of Douglas-fir, a disease that causes the tree to lose the previous year's needles each time it attacks, was particularly prevalent in northwestern Montana and, along with budworm and midge damage, markedly reduced shipments from this area.

Table 1.--Shipments of Christmas trees by rail and truck from Montana, by counties, 1960

County	Rail shipments	Truck shipments	Total	Percent
	Thousands of trees			
Lincoln	831	178	1,009	31
Flathead	708	158	866	27
Missoula	223	302	525	16
Sanders	199	239	438	14
Lake	266	39	305	10
Ravalli	10	23	33	1
Others	0	24	24	1
Total	2,237	963	3,200	100

2/ Dickerman, M. B. Christmas tree shipments drop 24 percent. Northern Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Expt. Sta. Res. Note 59, 5 pp. 1948.

3/ Terrell, T. T. In Quarterly Report, Division of Forest Insect Research, Intermountain Forest and Range Expt. Sta. (Unpublished).

4/ Denton, R. E. In Quarterly Report, Division of Forest Insect Research, Intermountain Forest and Range Expt. Sta. (Unpublished).

Three-fourths of all the trees shipped from Montana in 1960 came from Lincoln, Flathead, and Missoula Counties; Lincoln County was the top producing area of the State. Since 1956, the leading position has alternated regularly between Lincoln and Flathead Counties, although for the entire period of record, Flathead County has held the lead about two-thirds of the time. Over the last 10 years, these three counties have provided from 74 to 85 percent of the State's shipments, but a noticeable downward trend has developed as other counties have increased their shipments.

Table 2.--Rail and truck Christmas tree shipments from Montana, 1942-1960

Year	Rail shipments		Truck shipments		Total shipments
	Thousands of trees	Percent	Thousands of trees	Percent	
1942	2,139	97	65	3	2,204
1943	2,931	94	172	6	3,103
1944	2,636	96	120	4	2,756
1945	2,556	94	168	6	2,724
1946	2,867	87	432	13	3,299
1947	2,210	88	306	12	2,516
1948	2,731	87	392	13	3,123
1949	2,817	86	440	14	3,257
1950	2,693	89	325	11	3,018
1951	2,784	90	301	10	3,085
1952	2,375	90	270	10	2,645
1953	2,389	79	631	21	3,020
1954	2,760	79	723	21	3,483
1955	2,855	88	380	12	3,235
1956	3,349	80	847	20	4,196
1957	2,631	71	1,089	29	3,720
1958	2,470	69	1,098	31	3,568
1959	2,741	73	1,010	27	3,751
1960	2,237	70	963	30	3,200

Most of the decline from 1959 shipments was the 18 percent slump in rail shipments, although truck shipments were also down nearly 5 percent. Truck shipments fell below the 1 million mark for the first time in the past 4 years.

Table 3.--Rail shipments of Montana Christmas trees to leading markets, 1960 and 1959

State	1960 Thousands of trees	1960 Percent	State	1959 Thousands of trees	1959 Percent
Texas	508	23	Texas	627	23
California	366	16	California	489	18
Oklahoma	233	10	Missouri	285	10
Iowa	204	9	Oklahoma	247	9
Missouri	190	9	Iowa	233	9
Kansas	171	8	Kansas	200	7
Illinois	119	5	Illinois	171	6
Nebraska	95	4	Nebraska	100	4
Louisiana	85	4	Louisiana	95	4
Hawaii	57	3	Tennessee	38	1
Others	209	9	Others	256	9
Total	2,237	100	Total	2,741	100

Rail shipments went to 25 states in 1960, and a few carloads were shipped for export to Bolivia. Texas and California retained their positions as the leading market states, and only minor changes occurred in the relative positions of midwestern states. However, shipments to Hawaii were sufficiently large in 1960 to place it among the 10 leading market states.

Table 4.--Christmas trees imported from Canada to Montana, 1946-1960

Year	Total trees imported	Percent of total shipped
1946	107,570	3.3
1947	89,944	3.6
1948	67,664	2.2
1949	54,050	1.7
1950	39,288	1.3
1951	72,036	2.3
1952	99,918	3.8
1953	99,055	3.3
1954	123,076	3.5
1955	125,603	3.9
1956	137,015	3.3
1957	46,809	1.3
1958	157,738	4.4
1959	189,590	5.1
1960	151,370	4.7

Christmas tree imports to Montana from Canada were 20 percent below imports in 1959. Except for a decided slump in 1957, imports from Canada since 1952 have tended to parallel the trend of Montana's shipments. Apparently these imports are seldom, if ever, increased markedly in years when Montana's output declines.